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United States Department of the Interior

U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
1011 East Tudor Road
Anchorage, Alaska 99503-6199



INCIDENTAL TAKE AUTHORIZATION (IHA-18-01)

ISSUED: June 20, 2018
EXPIRES: September 30, 2018

Hilcorp Alaska, LCC (Hilcorp) is authorized to take, by non-lethal Level B harassment, small numbers of northern sea otters (*Enhydra lutris kenyoni*; hereafter “sea otters¹”) during oil and gas exploration activities in Cook Inlet, Alaska between July 1, and September 30, 2018. This Incidental Harassment Authorization (IHA) is issued by the Regional Director–Alaska Region, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) in accordance with section 101(a)(5)(D) of the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA), as amended (16 U.S.C. 1371).

Activities are described in full in the following documents:

- Marine Mammals; Incidental Take during Specified Activities; Proposed Incidental Harassment Authorization for Northern Sea Otters in Cook Inlet, Alaska (83 FR 18330, April 26, 2018).
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Marine Mammals Management. 2018. Final environmental assessment for a proposed incidental harassment authorization for northern sea otters (*Enhydra lutris kenyoni*) during the 2018 Hilcorp Alaska, LLC, aerial survey project. Department of the Interior. Anchorage, Alaska.
- Fairweather Science, LLC. 2017. Application for incidental harassment authorization for 2018 Hilcorp seismic program Cook Inlet, Alaska. Prepared for Hilcorp Alaska, LLC. Anchorage, Alaska

General Conditions

- 1) The total number of takes is limited to that shown in Table 1. The taking by Level A harassment, serious injury, or death is prohibited. If take exceeds the level or type identified here, the IHA will be invalidated and the Service will reevaluate its findings.

¹. Throughout this document, “sea otters” means one or more sea otter.

Table 1. Authorized Level B Take of Sea Otters by Stock

Sea Otter Stock	Number of Incidents of Take ²	Number of Individual Otters Taken
Southcentral Stock (Eastern Cook Inlet)	170	168
Southwestern Stock (Western Cook Inlet)	523	410
Total	693	578

² Some individual otters may be taken more than once.

- 2) The taking of sea otters whenever the required conditions, mitigation, monitoring, and reporting measures have not been fully implemented as required by this IHA, is prohibited. Failure to follow measures specified herein may result in the modification, suspension, or revocation of this IHA.
- 3) If project activities cause unauthorized take (e.g. separation of mother from young, injury, or death) Hilcorp must take the following actions:
 - a) Cease its activities immediately (or reduce activities to the minimum level necessary to maintain safety);
 - b) Report the details of the incident to the Service Marine Mammals Management (MMM) immediately, but not later than 48 hours after the incident; and
 - c) Suspend further activities until the Service has reviewed the circumstances, determined whether additional mitigation measures are necessary to avoid further unauthorized taking, and notified Hilcorp that it may resume project activities.
- 4) All operations managers and aircraft pilots must receive a copy of this IHA and maintain access to it for reference at all times during project work. These personnel must understand, be fully aware of, and be capable of implementing the conditions of this IHA at all times during project work.
- 5) This IHA is valid only for activities associated with Hilcorp's proposed project as described in the documents cited on page 1. Changes to the proposed project without prior authorization may invalidate this IHA.
- 6) Hilcorp's IHA application is approved and fully incorporated into this IHA, with the amendments specifically noted herein and in the Proposed IHA (83 FR 18330, April 26, 2018). The application includes:
 - a) Hilcorp's original request for an IHA, dated November 2, 2017;
 - b) Hilcorp's response to a request for additional information from the Service, dated November 30, 2017;
 - c) Hilcorp's letter to the Service requesting an amendment to the original application, dated December 22, 2017;

- d) Hilcorp's Marine Mammal Monitoring and Mitigation Plan prepared by Fairweather Science, LLC, revised December 11, 2017; and
 - e) An email sent by Hilcorp on May 23, 2018, notifying the Service that the project start date was moved to July 1, 2018.
- 7) Operators³ will allow Service personnel or the Service's designated representative to visit project work sites to monitor impacts to sea otters and subsistence uses of sea otters at any time throughout project activities so long as it is safe to do so.

Avoidance and Minimization

- 8) Aircraft operators must take reasonable precautions to avoid harassment to sea otters.
- 9) Gravitational and magnetic surveys conducted with fixed-wing aircraft will be flown at no less than 152 meters (m) or 500 feet (ft) above sea level, and surveys with helicopters will be flown at no less than 91 m (300 ft) above ground level. Short-term deviations from the minimum may be conducted for safety due to weather or restricted visibility.
- 10) When approaching and departing survey areas, all aircraft must maintain a minimum altitude of 305 m (1,000 ft) to avoid unnecessary harassment of sea otters outside of the survey areas, except when a lower flight altitude is necessary for safety due to weather or restricted visibility.
- 11) Aircraft may not be operated in such a way as to separate members of a group of sea otters from other members of the group.

Monitoring

- 12) Pilots will be provided training and resources for identifying and collecting information on sea otters. Pilots will record information on sea otters during aerial surveys when it is safe and practical to do so.
- 13) Data collection will include flight records, locations and numbers of sea otters, and the dates and times of the corresponding aerial surveys. When feasible, data will also include aircraft heading, speed, and altitude; visibility, group size, and composition (adults/juveniles); initial behaviors of the sea otters before responding to aircraft; and descriptions of any apparent reactions to the aircraft.

Measures to Reduce Impacts to Subsistence Users

- 14) Prior to conducting the work, Hilcorp will take the following steps to reduce potential effects on subsistence harvest of sea otters:
 - a) avoid work in areas of known sea otter subsistence harvest;

³. "Operators" are all personnel operating under Hilcorp's authority, including all contractors and subcontractors.

- b) discuss the planned activities with subsistence stakeholders including Cook Inlet villages, traditional councils, and the Cook Inlet Regional Citizens Advisory Council;
 - c) identify and work to resolve concerns of stakeholders regarding the project's effects on subsistence hunting of sea otters;
- 15) During the work, Hilcorp will continue to coordinate with subsistence stakeholders, and if any new concerns are identified, notify the Service and continue to work to address these concerns.

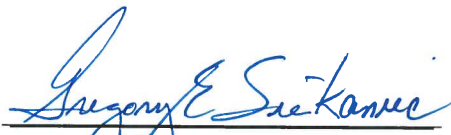
Reporting Requirements

- 16) Hilcorp must notify the Service at least 48 hours prior to commencement of activities.
- 17) Reports will be submitted to the Service's MMM weekly during project activities. The reports will summarize project work and monitoring efforts and will include the following items:
- a) Map showing data collection to date;
 - b) Summary of operating time by categories (approach, survey, departure, helicopter, fixed wing);
 - c) Compilation of flight line distances;
 - d) Daily record of weather conditions;
 - e) Record of flight line altitudes with explanations for any deviations below the minimums specified in parts 9 and 10, above;
 - f) Records of sea otter observations made under parts 13 and 14, above.
- 18) A final report will be submitted to the Service's MMM within 90 days after completion of work or expiration of the IHA. It will include a summary of monitoring efforts and observations. All project activities will be described, along with any additional work yet to be done. Factors influencing visibility and detectability of marine mammals (wind, sea state, number of observers, fog, and glare) will be discussed. The report will describe changes in sea otter behavior resulting from project activities and any specific behaviors of interest. Sea otter observation records will be provided in the form of electronic database or spreadsheet files. The report will assess any effects Hilcorp's operations may have had on the availability of sea otters for subsistence harvest and evaluate the effectiveness of Hilcorp's efforts to prevent impacts to subsistence users of sea otters.
- 19) Injured, dead, or distressed sea otters that are not associated with project activities (e.g., animals found outside the project area, previously wounded animals, or carcasses with moderate to advanced decomposition or scavenger damage) must be reported to the Service as soon as possible and within 48 hours of discovery. Photographs, video, location information, or any other available documentation shall be provided to the Service. Contact the Service (1-800-362-5148) or the Alaska SeaLife Center in Seward (1-888-774-7325, 24-hours).
- 20) All reports shall be submitted by email to fw7_mmm_reports@fws.gov.

21) Hilcorp must notify the Service upon project completion or end of the work season.

In accordance with section 7 of the Endangered Species Act of 1973 (ESA), intra-agency consultation with the Anchorage Field Office (AFO) for potential impacts of issuance of this IHA on threatened and endangered species and candidates for ESA listing was completed on February 2, 2018. The AFO concurred with our determination this action is not likely to adversely affect sea otters and their critical habitat. Activities related to the monitoring described in this IHA do not require a separate scientific research permit issued under section 104 of the MMPA.

Should you have any questions regarding this IHA and the required terms and conditions, please contact Supervisory Wildlife Biologist, Mr. Christopher Putnam at (907) 786-3844, or Wildlife Biologist, Ms. Kimberly Klein at (907) 786-3621, or by email at christopher_putnam@fws.gov or kimberly_klein@fws.gov



Regional Director, Region 7
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

20 June 2018
Date